

19/16

**SPEECH**

**COUNTDOWN 2000**

**WASHINGTON, DC**

**AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION**

**SEPTEMBER 11, 1990**

**C. EVERETT KOOP, MD**

**GREETINGS, ETC.**

**IT IS A SPECIAL TREAT FOR ME TO BE YOUR SEND-OFF SPEAKER  
TODAY. I FEEL FAMILIAR IN THIS ROLE, BECAUSE I'VE DONE IT  
ONCE BEFORE, BUT NOW I FEEL MUCH MORE CONFIDENT.**

**IT WAS, REALLY, A SEND-OFF SPEECH TO THE ENTIRE COUNTRY  
IN WHICH I FIRST CALLED FOR A SMOKE-FREE SOCIETY IN  
AMERICA BY THE YEAR 2000.**

**THAT WAS IN 1984, AT THE MEETING OF THE AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION AND THE AMERICAN THORACIC SOCIETY IN MIAMI. BACK THEN, ONLY 6 YEARS AGO, A SMOKE-FREE SOCIETY BY THE YEAR 2000 SEEMED LIKE A RADICAL IDEA.**

**I EVEN TOOK THE PRECAUTIONARY STEP OF HAVING MY SPEECH TYPED OUTSIDE OF GOVERNMENT OFFICES, AND OF AVOIDING THE NORMAL CLEARANCE PROCESS, SO CERTAIN WAS I THAT SOME OFFICIAL BEHOLDEN TO THE TOBACCO INTERESTS WOULD ATTEMPT TO SNUFF OUT THE IDEA.**

**BUT NOW IT IS VERY MUCH AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME.**

**AND WE HAVE A DECADE --JUST ENOUGH TIME TO SEE IT**

**HAPPEN,**

**JUST ENOUGH TIME TO MAKE IT HAPPEN.**

**AND YOU ARE THE PEOPLE WHO CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN.**

**WHEN I FIRST CALLED FOR A SMOKE-FREE SOCIETY BY 2000, I  
SAID VERY CLEARLY THAT I WASN'T PROPOSING ANOTHER  
GOVERNMENT PROGRAM. THIS WAS NOT GOING TO BE A PUBLIC  
HEALTH SERVICE INITIATIVE...NOR WAS THIS GOING TO BE  
ANOTHER PET PROJECT OF THE U.S. SURGEON GENERAL.**

**INSTEAD, I RAISED THE IDEA AS A CALL...A CALL FROM THE  
SURGEON GENERAL TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY.**

**YOU MAY RECALL THAT I DESIGNATED CERTAIN GROUPS TO DO CERTAIN THINGS: THE BOY SCOUTS, THE CAMPFIRE GIRLS, RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS, THE COALITION ON SMOKING OR HEALTH.**

**IN THE YEARS SINCE, EACH GROUP HAS RESPONDED, AND RESPONDED GENEROUSLY.**

**AND I AM PARTICULARLY PLEASED WITH YOUR RESPONSE, YOUR  
COMMITMENT, DEMONSTRATED SO CLEARLY DURING THE  
COUNTDOWN 2000 CONFERENCE THESE LAST TWO DAYS.**

**I HOPE YOU PAY ATTENTION TO MY BRIEF REMARKS, BUT I ALSO  
HOPE YOU HAVE ONE EYE ONE THE DOOR BECAUSE YOU ARE SO  
EAGER TO GET OUT THERE AND TO APPLY WHAT YOU'VE  
LEARNED TOGETHER HERE.**

**THE INITIAL CALL FOR A SMOKE-FREE SOCIETY HAS BEEN  
STRENGTHENED BY THE RECEPTION AFFORDED A NUMBER OF  
SURGEON GENERAL'S REPORTS ON SMOKING.  
IN PARTICULAR, THE SURGEON GENERAL'S REPORTS ON  
INVOLUNTARY SMOKING, AND ON NICOTINE ADDICTION WORKED  
TOGETHER TO GIVE THE MILITANT ANTI-SMOKERS NEW AND  
POWERFUL WEAPONS.**

**THE RECENT WIDELY PRAISED AND QUOTED STUDY OF EPA ON  
ILL EFFECTS OF PASSIVE SMOKING SHOWS THE CAUSE IS BEING  
TAKEN UP OUTSIDE THE HEALTHCARE AGENCIES,. . .**

**ALTHOUGH I AM LESS THAN PLEASED BY THE STRANGE SILENCE  
OF THE CURRENT SURGEON GENERAL, AND BY THE SECRETARY  
OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES UNDERCUTTING HIS SEVERAL  
STRONG ANTI-SMOKING STATEMENTS BY HIS TOLERATION OF  
TOBACCO EXPORTS.**

**THE NONSMOKER WAS MERELY IRRITATED AT FIRST...THEN  
BECAME ANNOYED...AND THEN TURNED MILITANT.  
STUDIES INDICATING THAT PASSIVE SMOKING LED TO 46,000  
DEATHS ANNUALLY (3,000 FROM LUNG CANCER, 11,000 FROM  
OTHER CANCERS, 32,000 FROM HEART DISEASE) MADE THE NON-  
SMOKER MILITANT ...AND SUCCESSFUL IN ACHIEVING CHANGES  
IN SOCIAL CUSTOMS AND IN LOCAL AND STATE LAW.  
NOW, AS MANY AS 425 COMMUNITIES HAVE ADOPTED  
ORDINANCES RESTRICTING SMOKING IN PUBLIC**

**A MOST SATISFYING VICTORY IS THE AIRLINE SMOKING BAN  
THAT BECAME EFFECTIVE LAST WINTER.**

**OF THE 16,000 DAILY FLIGHTS IN THE USA, ONLY 28 SLIP  
THROUGH THE BAN, ALLOWING SMOKERS TO FOUL THE AIR.**

**AND NORTHWEST AIRLINES VOLUNTARILY KEEPS THE CABIN AIR  
SMOKE-FREE ALL THE WAY TO HAWAII. OTHER AIRLINES --**

**ALASKA, DELTA, EASTERN, AND U.S. AIR-- HAVE ALSO EXTENDED  
THE BAN BEYOND THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW.**

**AND REMEMBER, LAST NOVEMBER A TOUGH LOCAL SMOKING  
CONTROL ORDINANCE WAS APPROVED BY THE VOTERS IN  
GREENSBORO, N.C. , IN SPITE OF HEAVY OPPOSITION BY  
TOBACCO COMPANIES.**

**IF THE TOBACCO COMPANIES CAN BE BEATEN IN NORTH  
CAROLINA, THEY CAN BE BEATEN ANYWHERE!**

**SMOKING HABITS HAVE CHANGED.**

**FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, AT MEDICAL MEETINGS, WHERE DOCTORS  
SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER, THE AIR WAS BLUE WITH SMOKE.**

**NOW YOU RARELY SEE A PHYSICIAN SMOKE;**

**IN 1964, BEFORE THE FIRST SURGEON GENERAL'S REPORT ON  
SMOKING, OVER HALF OF ADULT AMERICANS SMOKED.**

**WHEN I BECAME SURGEON GENERAL IN 1981, THE NUMBER HAD  
DECLINED TO 33 PERCENT.**

**WHEN I LEFT OFFICE 8 YEARS LATER, THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN  
SMOKERS HAD SHRUNK EVEN MORE, TO 26 PERCENT.**

**FEW THINGS GIVE ME AS MUCH SATISFACTION AS THAT  
DRAMATIC DECREASE, FROM 33 PERCENT TO 26 PERCENT.**

**AND IT NOW APPEARS THAT DURING MY LAST YEAR IN OFFICE,  
SMOKING DROPPED ANOTHER 4 PERCENT.**

**BETWEEN 1964 AND 1985 APPROXIMATELY THREE-QUARTERS OF A  
MILLION SMOKING-RELATED DEATHS WERE AVOIDED OR  
POSTPONED BY DECISIONS TO QUIT OR NOT TO START SMOKING.**

**EACH POSTPONED DEATH REPRESENTED AN AVERAGE GAIN OF 2  
DECADES OF LIFE EXPECTANCY.**

**NEARLY HALF OF ALL LIVING ADULTS WHO HAVE EVER SMOKED  
HAVE QUIT.**

**BUT, SIMPLY QUITTING IS STILL NOT THE WAY MOST SMOKERS  
STOP SMOKING.**

**I OFTEN BEGIN ONE OF MY LECTURES ON SMOKING WITH THE  
REMINDER THAT**

**"A THOUSAND AMERICANS WILL STOP SMOKING TODAY. . . .**

**THEIR FUNERALS WILL BE HELD WITHIN THE NEXT THREE OR  
FOUR DAYS."**

**WHY DO I FEEL I HAVE TO SAY SOMETHING DRAMATIC TO GET  
PEOPLE'S ATTENTION?**

**I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO.**

**WHAT IS IT ABOUT TOBACCO THAT NUMBS THE AMERICAN  
PEOPLE?**

**IF ANYTHING ELSE KILLED 390,000 OF OUR FELLOW-CITIZENS  
EACH YEAR, THE PUBLIC WOULD DEMAND ACTION FROM OUR  
GOVERNMENT.**

**INSTEAD, TOBACCO HAS, FROM THE BEGINNING, BEEN CODDLED  
BY OUR GOVERNMENT.**

**THIS DISTINGUISHED AUDIENCE KNOWS ABOUT THAT.**

**AS A PHYSICIAN AND FORMER PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER, I DON'T  
WANT TO RAISE YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE --OR MAKE YOUR  
BLOOD BOIL-- BY REVIEWING THE SORRY STORY IN GREAT  
DETAIL.**

**BUT IN A FEW WORDS, I'LL REMIND YOU THAT TOBACCO HAS  
BEEN ASSOCIATED NOT ONLY WITH DISEASE AND DEATH, BUT  
ALSO WITH MONEY.**

**THAT, OF COURSE IS THE REASON FOR ITS SPECIAL TREATMENT  
AND FOR ITS INTERNATIONAL POWER.**

**TOBACCO WAS THE CASH CROP THAT FINANCED THE AMERICAN  
REVOLUTION --THOSE VIRGINIA PLANTERS FETCHED A GREATER  
RETURN FOR TOBACCO LEAVES THAN DID THE HARDY NEW  
ENGLANDERS WHO GREW PUMPKINS IN THE FIELDS AROUND  
BOSTON.**

**CONGRESS HAS BEEN HELD HOSTAGE EVER SINCE.**

**DESPITE THE SINISTER ASSOCIATIONS, FIRST WITH SLAVERY, AND  
LATER WITH CANCER AND HEART DISEASE, AMERICAN TOBACCO  
HAS ENJOYED GOVERNMENT PROTECTION.**

**TOBACCO MONEY EXPLAINS THE RELUCTANCE OF CONGRESS TO  
TOLERATE ANY REGULATION OF TOBACCO, SO IT HAS BEEN  
DECLARED TO BE NEITHER A FOOD, NOR A DRUG, NOR A  
COSMETIC:**

**A LOOSE CANNON ON THE DECK OF SPACESHIP EARTH.**

**ANY SPEECH ON SMOKING BECOMES A "GOOD NEWS/BAD NEWS" STORY.**

**THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT WE ARE --AT LAST, AND SLOWLY-- WINNING THE WAR AGAINST TOBACCO.**

**THE BAD NEWS IS THAT THERE ARE MANY BATTLES STILL TO FIGHT.**

**FIRST, SOME OF THE GOOD NEWS.**

**THE NON-SMOKERS ARE ON THE OFFENSIVE, AND THEY ARE**

**WINNING.**

**I'M SURE YOUR SESSIONS HAVE PROVIDED MANY EXAMPLES OF**

**VICTORIES, LARGE AND SMALL.**

**HOSPITAL STAFFS ARE DEMANDING THAT THEIR FACILITIES BE**

**MADE SMOKE-FREE.**

**WORKING PEOPLE ARE ASKING FOR SMOKE-FREE  
ENVIRONMENTS WHERE THEY WORK.**

**IN 1980 ONLY 16 PERCENT OF AMERICAN COMPANIES HAD A  
SMOKING POLICY; BY LAST YEAR 68 PERCENT HAD SMOKING  
POLICIES. IN 1988 1 OUT OF 4 COMPANIES BANNED ALL  
SMOKING, AND JUST ONE YEAR LATER THE FIGURE WAS 38  
PERCENT.**

**PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE ARE HANGING THOSE "THANK YOU FOR  
NOT SMOKING SIGNS" IN THEIR WAITING ROOMS.**

**AND HOUSEHOLDERS ARE TACKING UP THE SAME SIGN OVER  
THEIR FRONT DOORBELLS.**

**JUST LAST SPRING, UNIVERSITIES LIKE HARVARD, C.U.N.Y.,  
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS TOOK THE EXEMPLARY STEP OF DIVESTING  
TOBACCO STOCKS, OFTEN IN RESPONSE TO STUDENT PROTEST. ...  
A GOOD TREND.  
LET'S KEEP UP THIS PRESSURE ON THEM.**